

# Important Photographic Terms

Note: No student will be allowed to check out a camera until you have scored 100% on the test covering the material on this page.

TERM	Definition
18% Grey	The value all camera meters try to establish when metering a scene
Ambient Light	Available light or <i>ambient light</i> refers to any source of light that is not explicitly supplied by the photographer
Aperture Mode	(A) Primarily for nature and macro photographers or anyone concerned with controlling Depth of Field.
Back Light	When the predominate light source is coming from behind the subject and thus creates a silhouette.
Bokeh	<i>Bokeh</i> describes the appearance, or "feel," of out-of-focus areas. <i>Bokeh</i> is not how far something is out-of-focus, <i>bokeh</i> is the character of whatever blur is there.
Bracketing	The practice of metering a subject and then taking several exposures generally 1 lower, one correctly metered, and one higher than the suggested value.
Continuous Mode	Allows the camera to fire multiple frames when the shutter is pressed. The number of frames taken depends on the length of time the shutter is depressed and the amount of space in the camera buffer.
Depth of Field	The amount of the subject matter in a photograph that will be viewed (perceived) as being in focus. Generally said to be 1/3 in front of the focused subject and 2/3 behind the focused subject.
DSLR	Digital Single Lens Reflex. The reflex design scheme is the primary difference between a DSLR and other digital cameras. In the reflex design scheme, light travels through a single lens and a mirror is used to reflect a portion of that light through the view finder - hence the name Single Lens Reflex.
Fast Lens	Any lens with an aperture of 2.8 and below
Focus Point(s)	The number of spots the camera using when acquiring subject focus.
Histogram	The meter sets the camera up for the exposure and the histogram verifies the results on a graphic scale showing range of both highlights and shadow. In general a good histogram is one that shows no clipping on either end of the graph.
ISO	A method of expressing the speed of sensitivity of a camera sensor. Low ISO values are more grain (noise) free and require more light. High ISO values produce more grain (noise) and require less light.
JPG	Used for quick distribution of files. Comes from the camera ready for printing. Note every time you save a JPG file you LOSE data.
Live View	A setting which allows the photographer to use the LCD screen to compose or focus the camera.
Long Exposure	Any exposure over 1/30 second, requiring support for the camera

Manual Mode	(M) give the photographer complete control of the camera requiring that the photographer set shutter and aperture.
Metering (Matrix)	Camera system that actually measures exposure, instead of just light. It is one of the most important advances in photographic technology. This meter knows how to make white snow or sand look white, instead of a conventional light meter's making everything look medium 18% gray.
Metering (spot)	With spot metering, the camera will only measure a very small area of the scene (between 1-5% of the viewfinder area). This will typically be the very centre of the scene, but some cameras allow the user to select a different off-centre spot, or to recompose by moving the camera after metering.
Mirror Up	Setting in the camera when the mirror is locked in the up position to prevent vibration during a long exposure.
Noise	Noise is the equivalent to "grain" in film photography but in a DSLR there is the addition of some really ugly color speckles scattered throughout the file. The higher the ISO the more likely there will be noise. Noise hides and dark places in the photo (shadows)
Point and Shoot	In the digital world, this term applies mostly to the wide range of small handheld cameras that require little more than pointing and shooting to get a picture.
Prime Lens	Lenses that have a fixed focal-length, and thus always take photos at the same distance-perspective. Prime lenses have the advantage of being simpler, lighter, and cheaper to construct than zooms. They also tend to produce sharper images (though this is not always the case anymore with the very best zooms) - and have larger maximum apertures (great for low-light shooting).
Program Mode	(P) is designed for those times when you just want to shoot pictures and not think about camera settings. The camera sets shutter speed and aperture on its own.
RAW	The photo format that stores the most data and allows for the most control in post-processing. Requires processing of the file before printing.
Red Eye	Caused by the light from a flash striking the retina of an eye are reflecting back to the camera. Can be solved by moving the position of the flash away from the direct plane of the subject and the lens.
Self-Timer	Setting which allows the photographer to set the camera, walk away and the camera will fire itself.
Shutter Mode	(S) is for those times when you need to control the shutter speed while allowing the camera to maintain correct aperture for the available light. Used primarily for action photography.
Telephoto Lens	Any lens over 85mm on a full frame sensor (generally connected to long lenses 200mm and above).
White Balance	How the camera interprets the color of light. Adjusting white balance helps force the camera to compensate for the fact that most lighting conditions aren't perfectly white. Many indoor lights have a yellowish tinge to them, while fluorescent lights have a bluish tint. Even natural light is a little bluer than you might think. You can set white balance manually by adjusting it up or down or selecting the appropriate setting, then taking some test shots to see which ones look most natural.

Wide Angle Lens	Any lens designated below 35mm on a full frame sensor (below 28mm on a cropped sensor)
Zoom Lens	These lenses sport variable focal-lengths, giving the photographer increased flexibility in taking pictures, without having to swap lenses. For example, a 24-70mm zoom allows the photographer to go from wide-angle lens (24mm) to normal (at 50mm) and almost to the low telephoto range (at 70mm) all with a single lens. They tend to be much heavier and more mechanically complex (and thus expensive) compared to primes. It is also hard to use large apertures for zooms, with fixed apertures being particularly problematic to achieve. Thus, most inexpensive zooms have variable max apertures (meaning the max aperture value changes depending on the focal length the photographer uses.) Fixed apertures are available, but they tend to be quite pricey, especially at larger apertures (f2.8 tends to be the highest max aperture available for DSLR zooms.)